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DEFECTORS PLAYI
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They Often Provide an Acc
Vital Iron Curtain Secrets

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 15—According to Allen W. Dulles, the country's most experienced intelligence expert, "the piercing of secrets behind the Iron and Bamboo Curtains is made easier for the West because of the volunteers who come our way."

The former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (and who should know better?) points out in his book, "The Craft of Intelligence," that information obtained from "volunteers" (he prefers that word to defectors) has "added to our basic fund of knowledge" about the Communist world.

Among these volunteers, he adds, may be soldiers, diplomats, scientists, engineers, ballet dancers, athletes "and, not infrequently, intelligence officers."

Exemplifying the last category was the fiction-like episode at the International Disarmament Conference in Geneva, where a member of the Soviet delegation dropped out of sight. The Russians waited five days, then reported his absence to the Swiss police.

Thereupon, the State Department here announced that the missing man, Yuri I. Nosenko, had requested political asylum in the United States. Furthermore, sources here said, although Mr. Nosenko was listed as an "expert" with the Soviet delegation to the conference, he was actually a ranking staff officer of the Komitet Gossudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti (Committee of State Security) or K.G.B.

Details Secret

Exactly when did Mr. Nosenko come over? How? Why? There were no clear answers. Under pressure of Soviet official demands ,and to insure reciprocation some future time, Mr. Nosenko was produced here yesterday for separate interviews by Soviet and Swiss embassy officials. Where were the interviews held? No immediate answer. (A fine secret, requiring United States-Soviet-Swiss cooperation.) Where is he now? No answer. Had he been working for United States or other intelligence operations? Had the Russian Government found him out before he fled? No answers.

There are always more questions than answers in the field of intelligence. One obvious question is: How important is the information obtained from defectors? In the latest case, it may be very important. As a member of the Soviet disarmament delegation, Mr. Nosenko was in a position to know something about Soviet defense and disarmament policies, including weapons in place and under development.

Perhaps more important than that would be his reports on the structure of the Soviet intelligence organization, his personal assignments, the kind of information the Soviet authorities are seeking these days, the identities of their secret contacts abroad, the persons in Soviet officialdom who are trusted—or not trusted—in the Kremlin.

Through various means, the United States obtains considerable military, industrial and scientific information about the Soviet Union. What is difficult to come by is the flavor of political thinking within the Soviet hierarchy. What premises do they accept for day-to-day and year-to-year objectives? How do they make their decisions?

[redacted] fection of an intelligence officer is often the equivalent of a direct penetration into his headquarters and can paralyze for many months the service he left behind.

Multiple Mysteries

But what assurance is there that a defector is actually a defector? The bizarre world of secret intelligence, where things are not supposed to be what they seem, anyway, is peopled with double and triple agents, phony defectors and re-defectors.

Take some aspects of the strange story of Harold A. R. Philby, the former British diplomat who nearly rose to the top of one of the most important sections of British Intelligence before he finally joined two diplomatic colleagues, Guy Burgess and Donald MacLean, in defection to the Soviet Union.

Philby, under suspicion of being a Soviet agent, had been dismissed from the British Foreign Service. He was in Beirut, Lebanon, as a correspondent for a British newspaper, a job arranged for him without his knowledge so that British Intelligence could keep him under surveillance. Several residents of Beirut also were asked to keep an eye on him informally. The head of the Lebanese police was asked to watch him.

Philby married a young woman who was among those asked to watch him. He was found to have sought to enlist the services of a prominent Arab politician as a spy for—not Soviet, but British, Intelligence. The amazed Arab immediately told his equally amazed contacts in British Intelligence—for whom he was already working. Then Philby disappeared and surfaced later in the Soviet Union.

Was Philby a Soviet spy? A British spy? A double agent? Will he return to the West? And

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has he anything to do with other publicized defectors, eastward or westward? If not Mr. Nosenko, perhaps William H. Martin and Bernon F. Mitchell, the young Americans who went to the Soviet Union in 1960, presumably taking with them code and cryptograph secrets of the National Security Agency, where they had been employed.

And were any of them related in conspiracy to Oleg Penkovsky, the high Russian official who was executed in Moscow last June for passing secrets to the alleged British businessman, Grenville M. Wynne, whom the Russians tried and imprisoned.

Kafka-esque World

Nothing is too outlandish in the Kafka-esque netherworld of international espionage. Each side presumably indulges in its share of unusual operations. Thus, not only are phony defectors a possibility, but we have Mr. Dulles's word for it that the Soviet Union—not the United States—has "from time to time mounted phony defections."

However, this is not considered a satisfactory way of planting an agent, Mr. Dulles observed. A spurious defector may pick up some information on what is known or not known about his country and the publicity surrounding a dramatic return to his homeland because of "disillusionment" may prove embarrassing to the country of haven.

But the Soviet authorities are said not to have indulged in this practice lately, usually because it is possible to discover quite early whether defectors are bona fide. Besides, in some cases the "phony" defectors confessed their mission and actually defected.

For all of this, the role of espionage, including the portion dependent upon defections, should not be exaggerated. By far the greatest portion of vital intelligence that comes into the hands of government policy makers is gathered through humdrum routine from sources available to all.

A rough breakdown by Harry Howe Ransom in his book, "Central Intelligence and National Security," allotted press, radio and published documents 25 per cent; routine reports by the State Department and other governmental agencies, 25 per cent; reports by military attachés and other sanctioned specialists, 30 per cent, and clandestine operations, 20 per cent.

That does not mean the clandestine role is insignificant. In intelligence gathering, nothing is insignificant, including the information that may be brought by a defector—even a phony defector, when he is found out.

Of course, not all defectors are intelligence agents. In addition to such intelligence and security men as Igor Gouzenko, Pyotr Deraybin and Nikolai Kholkhov—and the Pole, Joseph Swiatlo; the Czech, Frantisek Tisler; the Hungarian, Bela Lapusnyik, and the Communist Chinese, Chao Fu—the West gained with Oleg Lanchevsky, the Soviet scientist, and Aleksander Kaznacheev, the Soviet diplomat.

Greater Coup

The defection to Russia of Bruno Pontecorvo, the British atomic scientist, probably was a greater coup, however.

And also, many defectors are not surprise gifts. Many of them have been operating "in place" in order to serve from advantageous positions. When they seem about to be exposed, or they tire of their way of life, they cross over.

It is all a devious game, something like the story of the two Russians who met at the railroad station. One said he was traveling to Minsk.

"Aha," came the retort, "you tell me you are traveling to Minsk because you want me to believe you are going to Pinsk. But if you were really going to Pinsk, you would not have told me you were going to Minsk. So why do you lie to me?"